SAIIA
SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

OCCASIONAL PAPER 244

SEPTEMBER 2016

VALUES, CULTURE AND THE IVORY TRADE BAN

YU-SHAN WU, STEPHANIE RUPP & CHRIS ALDEN

African perspectives. Global insights.

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA) has a long and proud record as South Africa's premier research institute on international issues. It is an independent, non-government think tank whose key strategic objectives are to make effective input into public policy, and to encourage wider and more informed debate on international affairs, with particular emphasis on African issues and concerns. It is both a centre for research excellence and a home for stimulating public engagement. SAIIA's occasional papers present topical, incisive analyses, offering a variety of perspectives on key policy issues in Africa and beyond. Core public policy research themes covered by SAIIA include good governance and democracy; economic policymaking; international security and peace; and new global challenges such as food security, global governance reform and the environment. Please consult our website www.saiia.org.za for further information about SAIIA's work.

GOVERNANCE OF AFRICA'S RESOURCES PROGRAMME

The Governance of Africa's Resources Programme (GARP) of SAIIA is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The programme contributes to policy governing the exploitation and extraction of Africa's natural resources by assessing existing governance regimes and suggesting alternatives to targeted stakeholders. GARP examines the governance of a number of resource-rich African countries within the context of cross-cutting themes such as environmental change and sustainability. Addressing these elements is critical for Africa to avoid deepening the challenges of governance and reducing its vulnerability to related crises, including climate change, energy security and environmental degradation. The programme focuses on the mining, forestry, fisheries and petroleum sectors in select African countries.

PROGRAMME HEAD Alex Benkenstein, alex.benkenstein@saiia.org.za

Please note that all currencies are in US$ unless otherwise indicated.

Cover photo © http://www.istockphoto.com/za/photo/african-elephant-gm476368820-66570493?st=_p_476368820

ABSTRACT

The new reality of a world without ivory trade demands a re-examination of human values towards both elephants and ivory and what each has come to represent. The closure of the world's largest ivory markets (US and China), in line with the longstanding international ivory trade ban, must reflect a change in values. Understanding those values and how they interact with each other will be critical to successful implementation. Values act as arbitrators of meaning, sources of interests and – when collectively framed as regulatory norms regimes – the basis of compliance for local communities. This paper addresses how policymakers can optimally ensure that such international norms, decided at multilateral forums such as CITES, gain traction at the local level, where it really matters. Local values associated with elephants and ivory differ widely from place to place. At the coalface of supply and demand are often competing and mutually exclusive value sets. For instance, consumers of ivory may attach status significance to owning a rare piece. On the other end of the spectrum, communities living with elephants may view those elephants as an extension of their identity. These value sets are differentiated across levels of authority and from one region to the next. International and domestic ivory trade prohibitions that do not take this complexity into account may therefore inadvertently produce adverse reactions in local contexts. These dynamics are crucial to understand if international norms are to be locally effective, both on the supply and demand sides of the equation.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

YU-SHAN WU is a Senior Researcher for the Foreign Policy Programme at SAIIA and a DPhil candidate in International Relations at the University of Pretoria. She has published and co-published on China's public diplomacy in Africa (*Media International Australia*, 2014, *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 2016) and China–South Africa relations (*Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, 2016), and contributed to *How Africans and Their Governments are Shaping Relations with China* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

STEPHANIE RUPP is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the City University of New York, Lehman College. She received her PhD from Yale University. She has conducted ethnographic research in the Congo River basin for over 20 years, working both in the Ituri forest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Lobéké forest region of south-eastern Cameroon. She is the author of *Forests of Belonging: Identities, Ethnicities, and Stereotypes in the Congo River Basin* (University of Washington Press, 2011).

CHRIS ALDEN is a Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science and a Research Associate with the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). He is author/co-author of numerous books, including *Mozambique and the Construction of the New African State* (Palgrave, 2003), *China in Africa* (Zed, 2007), *Land, Liberation and Compromise in Southern Africa* (Palgrave/Macmillan, 2009) and *The South and World Politics* (Palgrave, 2010).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Values, Culture and the Ivory Trade Ban is one of five papers produced as part of a series generously funded by Stop Ivory (four papers) and the Science for Nature and People (SNAP) project (one paper). SAIIA would like to thank Alex Rhodes of Stop Ivory for peer reviewing the papers and his support of this project.

These papers recognise the emergence of a 'new reality' in elephant conservation, where the majority of African elephant range states and the two largest ivory markets, the US and China, have decided that to secure a future with elephants across Africa, the international ban on ivory trade must continue and all ivory domestic markets must close. Humans will only continue to make space for elephants if we value them and if local communities derive benefits from them. In the emerging new reality of a world without ivory trade, these five papers are a timely and essential contribution to our thinking and policymaking as we look to secure a meaningful future for elephants and people. The hope is that these papers will assist African elephant range states and other countries in their discussions as to how to achieve this together.

Stop Ivory is an NGO registered in the UK and US committed to protecting elephants, stopping the ivory trade and securing a meaningful future for elephants and communities. Stop Ivory is the joint-secretariat of the Elephant Protection Initiative with Conservation International.

For more information visit **www.stopivory.org** and follow on Twitter **@stopivory**.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CAMPFIRE	Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora
NGO	non-governmental organisation
MINFOF	Cameroonian Ministry of Forests and Wildlife
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

INTRODUCTION

A movement towards a new reality of a world without a legal ivory trade demands a re-examination of human values in terms of both elephants and ivory and what each has come to represent. The closure of the world's largest ivory markets (US and China), in line with the longstanding international ivory trade ban, must reflect a change in values. Values act as arbitrators of meaning, sources of interests and – when collectively framed as regulatory norms regimes – the basis of compliance for local communities. Understanding those values, what inspires change and how they interact at global/local levels is always going to be critical to successful implementation of an internationally-derived regulatory programme.

International efforts to ban the ivory trade have been spearheaded by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES), which has since 1989 placed most African elephant populations under Appendix 1 (which bans trade in such listed species).[1] This change in CITES status was an active response to the declining African elephant populations (in Eastern and Central Africa), which have been routinely exposed to pressures from drought, growing and migrating human populations (and thus less open land) and poaching for their tusks and skin, to be sold on the international market.[2]

The question remains whether such a multilateral decision and the values that inform it has been effectively internationalised into political authority, particularly as a range of factors – such as differing societal values and political dynamics within states and across societies – affect the degree of acceptance at the local level. The liberal paradigm of International Relations emphasises that state behaviour and power are conditioned by global forces, such as global economic integration or commodity markets.[3] Furthermore, scholars explain that states are conditioned by the role of international regimes, defined as social institutions around which 'actor expectations converge in a given area of international relations'.[4] At the same time, global regulatory and prohibition regimes emerging out of treaty organisations such as CITES are ultimately enforced by states and their domestic institutions. These institutions and accompanying local regulatory regimes are beholden to local societal forces, which can be at profound odds with global regimes and, as a result, thwart their underlying purpose.

For instance, the highest levels of government in China and the US were hailed for agreeing to phase out their domestic ivory markets during a meeting between the two

1 For a useful reference as to what CITES is and does, see Nowak K, 'CITES alone cannot combat illegal wildlife trade', SAIIA (South African Institute for International Affairs) Policy Insights, 34. Johannesburg: SAIIA, August 2016.

2 Nadelmann EA, 'Global prohibition regimes: The evolution of norms in international society', *International Organization*, 44, 4, 1990, pp. 479–526.

3 Walt SM, 'International Relations: One world, many theories', *Foreign Policy*, 110, 1998, p. 38.

4 Ruggie JG, 'International regimes, transactions, and change: Embedded liberalism in the postwar economic order', *International Organization*, 36, 2, 1982, p. 380.

sides in September 2015.[5] In April 2016 this landmark agreement was followed by Kenya's sending an unequivocal message against the illegal trade by destroying its stockpile of ivory.[6] This was one of dozens of international displays of the destruction of ivory in the past several years. However, there have also been cases of relapse in the ivory ban. For example, at the other end of the spectrum Zimbabwean and Namibian authorities petitioned the CITES ban on ivory trade in May 2016 (criticising its questionable success), in the hope of releasing their stockpiles on the market.[7] There were also two historical one-off sales of ivory stockpiles (in 1999 and again in 2008, due to pressure from source countries in Southern Africa and support from Japan and China), which some analysts argue have stimulated renewed ivory demand[8] as well as the illegal trade.[9] The causal relationship remains unclear, with opponents of the ban arguing that the one-off sales had nothing to do with stimulating demand, but rather that the moratorium on future sales announced in 2007 created an expectation of future scarcity, thus driving up the price and generating speculative activity. But this argument is weak, as the moratorium was only for nine years and applied to only four range states. Moreover, raw ivory prices have declined from $2,200/kg in mid 2014 to roughly $1,100/kg by December 2015. There are clearly a number of interacting factors that contribute to price formation.

High ivory prices have meant that syndicates can afford to pay poachers relatively well, especially when considered against the next-best income opportunities that many local community members have in elephant range states. In this respect, perhaps the most neglected factor is the role of the local communities and their perspective as purveyors of societal values and interests. Local values associated with elephants and ivory differ widely from place to place. At the coalface of supply and demand are often competing and mutually exclusive value sets. For instance, consumers of ivory may attach status

5 *Traffic*, 'China and US pledge to end domestic ivory trade is huge boost in fight against elephant poaching', 26 September 2015, http://www.traffic.org/home/2015/9/26/china-and-us-pledge-to-end-domestic-ivory-trade-is-huge-boos.html, accessed 17 May 2016. The US has since enacted an amendment to rule 4(d) that prohibits nearly all domestic trade in ivory: see Federal Register, 'Endangered and threatened wildlife and plants; revision of the Section 4d rule for the African elephant (Loxodonta africana)', 6 June 2016, https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2016/06/06/2016-13173/endangered-and-threatened-wildlife-and-plants-revision-of-the-section-4d-rule-for-the-african?utm_campaign=subscription+mailing+list&utm_medium=email&utm_source=federalregister.gov, accessed 10 August 2016.

6 Alden C & R Harvey, 'The case for burning ivory', *Project Syndicate*, 29 April 2016a, https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/kenya-ivory-stockpile-destruction-by-chris-alden-and-ross-harvey-2016-04, accessed 10 August 2016.

7 Alden C & R Harvey, 'Ivory sales by Zimbabwe and Namibia could "create demand spike"', *Business Day*, 17 May 2016b, http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/2016/05/17/ivory-sales-by-zimbabwe-and-namibia-could-create-demand-spike, accessed 18 May 2016.

8 Hsiang S & N Sekar, 'Does Legalization Reduce Black Market Activity? Evidence from a Global Ivory Experiment and Elephant Poaching Data', National Bureau for Economics Working Paper, http://www.nber.org/papers/w22314.pdf, accessed 10 August 2016.

9 Russo C, 'Can elephants survive a legal ivory trade? Debate is shifting against it', *National Geographic*, 30 August 2014, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/08/140829-elephants-trophy-hunting-poaching-ivory-ban-cities/, accessed 1 April 2016.

significance to owning a rare piece. On the other end of the spectrum, communities living with elephants may view those elephants as an extension of their identity. These value sets are differentiated across levels of authority and from one region to the next. International and domestic ivory trade prohibitions that do not take this complexity into account may therefore inadvertently produce adverse reactions in local contexts. These dynamics are crucial to understand if international norms are to be locally effective, both on the supply and demand sides of the equation.

NORMS AND VALUES

A conventional definition of a norm is 'a standard of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity'.[10] Norms (as well as principles, rules and procedures)[11] are also one of the main components of international regimes.[12] In other words, norms – in this case the ban on ivory trade – seek to regulate agents who share a commitment to the particular principles underlying the CITES agreement.

There are also close links between domestic norms within formal political boundaries (states) and the development of international norms. New (sometimes referred to as 'prescriptive') norms that can be aligned to prevailing values and practices within a society are more likely to resonate and consequently be adopted. Part of the complexity of ensuring norm compliance is that it is intertwined with gaining domestic acceptance, which itself is strongly influenced by the role of domestic institutions (namely the political process and pre-existing cultural structures). For example, according to Hirata, Japan's rejection of the anti-whaling norm is one expression of the dissonance between international regimes and domestic institutions as hosts to societal concerns.[13] Indeed, environmental impact is not only a conversation about the technical aspects of problems and situations – it is also 'fed by a range of historical, cultural, and psychological factors' such as values, beliefs and socially shared attitudes that generate personal, group and cultural behaviours.[14]

Seen in this context, CITES is 'but one component of the existing patchwork of global and regional wildlife regimes, narrowly focused on the transnational trade issue, which is only one of the multiple threats to wildlife'.[15] Given this reality, the effectiveness of

10 Finnemore M & K Sikkink, 'International norm dynamics and political change', *International Organization*, 52, 4, 1989, p. 891. There are various types found in the literature, including regulatory, constitutive and prescriptive norms.

11 Importantly, Ruggie notes that norms and principles create the normative framework of international regimes, while rules and procedures are specific instruments to achieve the frameworks. See Ruggie JG, *op. cit.*, p. 380.

12 Finnemore M & K Sikkink, *op. cit.*, p. 889.

13 Hirata K, 'Beached whales: Examining Japan's rejection of an international norm', *Social Science Japan Journal*, 7, 2, 2004, p. 194.

14 López AG & MA Cuervo-Arango, 'Relationship among values, beliefs, norms and ecological behaviour', *Psicothema*, 20, 4, 2008, pp. 623–629.

15 Sand PH, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

CITES should thus be evaluated as one component in, but not the singular solution to, the ongoing flow of illicit ivory and elephant poaching. A recurring complication for international regimes and norm compliance is the rise of globalisation; the very trend that has an impact on the effectiveness of prohibition regimes and their ability to be successful. The advent of free trade areas, which eliminate trade boundaries, poses a challenge for CITES, which seeks to ensure that the international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.[16] Thus trade regimes do not always reflect the reality of the marketplace but rather the conduct of states vis-à-vis one another.[17]

The effectiveness of CITES should thus be evaluated as one component in, but not the singular solution to, the ongoing flow of illicit ivory and elephant poaching

Globalisation has created a sense of convergence between disparate societies and the different values that they may have through developments such as market integration, as well as integration through communication technologies, transportation, and heightened migration and international travel. In the economic sense it has arguably rendered nation states dysfunctional, replacing them with region-states as national boundaries are reconfigured to fit relative market demands.[18] This ease of flow between nations also suggests that values are likewise fluid, as they are constantly in exchange within a global market.

At the same time the globalisation phenomenon has endowed the discourse on values with distinctive material and monetary connotations, emphasising the exchange of goods and services rather than personal worth or desire. The establishment of monetary value as the common denominator in designating overall value to facilitate international exchange is reflected in how many consumers in otherwise different societies relate to ivory. The high ivory price derives in part from its perception as a wealth and status symbol in many African and Asian societies that are by tradition proximate to elephants. Although this perception precedes economic globalisation, it has been amplified through globalisation. Globalisation appears to have reinforced this pre-existing attribution of value and monetised it as a medium of exchange for commercial consumption. At the same time, it has contributed to the emergence of a massive Chinese middle class who can now afford ivory products, thereby exacerbating the elephant-poaching problem significantly.[19] Ivory is therefore an object with intersecting values that are historically, socially and, in the case of the global market, financially informed. The question of how to stem consumer demand for ivory is thus important, as it holds elusive yet overwhelming social value as an indicator of power and identity.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Ruggie JG, *op. cit.*, p. 383; Reeve R., *op. cit.*, p. 881.

18 Cornwell TB & J Drennan, 'Cross-cultural consumer/consumption research: Dealing with issues emerging from globalization and fragmentation', *Journal of Macromarketing*, 24, 2, 2004, p. 110.

19 Brennan AJ & JK Kalsi, 'Elephant poaching & ivory trafficking problems in sub-Saharan Africa: An application of O'Hara's principles of political economy', *Ecological Economics*, 120, 2015, p. 334; SADC, *Law Enforcement and Anti-Poaching Strategy*, 2016–2021, August 2015, p. 8, http://www.gaborone.diplo.de/contentblob/4715602/Daten/6225480/SADC_LEAP_FINAL.pdf, accessed 4 July 2016.

Value variance across societies gives us an important insight into why implementing the international ivory trade ban has not been a straightforward policy exercise

Applying this approach to different societies and the diverse values they ascribe to elephants provides deeper insight into the shifting dynamics at play in the development of international regimes on this particular form of illegal wildlife trade. For example, in addition to the emphasis on the value of ivory – which itself is riddled with contradictions – is the nutritional value placed on elephants as bush meat[20] in parts of Africa. Then there is also their non-consumptive use, such as elephants being conserved for photographic tourism, and cultural and religious reasons.[21] Even the drivers of elephant poaching for profit are varied, ranging between individuals engaged in criminal activities and those who see elephants as a means to meet basic needs in economically marginalised communities.[22] Value variance across societies gives us an important insight into why implementing the international ivory trade ban has not been a straightforward policy exercise.

VALUES, ELEPHANTS AND IVORY IN FOCUS: CAMEROON'S CONGO RIVER BASIN

The changing context of elephants in the far south-eastern corner of Cameroon, situated on the western rim of the Congo River basin, highlights historical shifts in the values of both elephants and ivory and subsequent changes in norms – how people engage with elephants and ivory. The discussion of south-eastern Cameroon demonstrates that the local values of elephants and ivory vary across time and are affected by external political and economic interests and interventions.

Historical context

The earliest records of hunting elephants – reaching as far back as the mid 19th century – emerge from oral histories recounted by Bangando, Baka and Bakwélé elders in south-eastern Cameroon, representing the three dominant communities of the region. The elders describe the area of the forest that they call Ndjangé, which today is at the heart of the Lobéké National Park, as a paradise of forest resources. People from all three communities came together in Ndjangé, especially during the dry season, to hunt and to gather forest resources such as wild mangoes, honey and yams. In this context of abundance, elephant hunting was a very different technical, social, political and economic experience than it is today.

20 In fact, a 'bush meat crisis', particularly in Central and West Africa, is explicitly referred to in SADC, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

21 See a recent article on the treatment of elephants in India, kept for religious reasons: C Russo, 'New film shows brutalization of temple elephants in India', *National Geographic*, 25 May 2016, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/05/160524-india-elephants-religion-animal-abuse-documentary-film-ganesh/, accessed 7 June 2016.

22 Roe D *et al.*, 'The elephant in the room: Sustainable use in the illegal wildlife trade debate', IIED (International Institute for Environment and Development) Briefing. London: IIED, February 2014.

In the early days, hunters used a variety of techniques to hunt elephants, including pit traps, stun traps, spears and axes. With tools that rely on human inventiveness and intelligence, as well as strength and endurance, elephant hunting was traditionally collaborative, requiring the wisdom, courage and strength of multiple experienced hunters. So difficult was a successful elephant hunt that hunting techniques also included magic; master hunters transformed themselves into elephants to infiltrate a herd before resuming human form in order to attack. Elephant hunting was also uncommon, usually reserved for the preparations for certain key ritual initiations. Elephant hunting, and the distribution of meat, was a highly social event. When hunters killed large mammals, including elephants and buffalos, they sent word back to the dry season settlement in the forest, or out to families staying near their permanent villages along the Boumba River, that they had made a sizable kill and needed the *mokopolo* (the carrying party) to assist with the transport of meat. Elephant meat was divided into large carrying baskets lined with big, round leaves and carried back to the village, where the meat was distributed far and wide by the village head (not by the hunters). People throughout the region came to collect meat for their families, and meat was also reserved to prepare for the upcoming initiation feast. In short, elephant hunting was never undertaken casually or clandestinely; elephant hunting was collaborative, and the distribution of meat was collective and reciprocal. Hunters brought the ivory tusks to the village head, who kept them in his house compound – not displayed, but safely tucked away – for marriage celebrations in the village. Any family in the village that welcomed a new bride would receive her into their home for the period of *monyadi*, using the chief's ivory tusks for her to rest her feet on. Other than this ceremonial use of tusks, ivory did not have any other uses prior to the arrival of European merchants in the late 19th century.

With tools that rely on human inventiveness and intelligence, as well as strength and endurance, elephant hunting was traditionally collaborative, requiring the wisdom, courage and strength of multiple experienced hunters

With the arrival of European merchants on the north-western rim of the Congo River basin in the 1880s, forest economies – including elephant hunting – and the social relations of life in the forest were altered. European traders accessed ivory and rubber through both economic inducements and physical punishments. Steam ships expecting to return laden with heavy loads of ivory and rubber were filled with cargoes of cloth, soap and salt, knives and other iron tools, to be exchanged with local hunters and petty traders for ivory. The commoditisation of ivory, in which hunters were rewarded in kind for individual 'sales' of ivory to European traders, transformed its value from a collectively accessed political and ritual material to an individually beneficial economic material that would reward the particular skills of individual hunters. The influx of European commodities ushered in dynamics of exchange that were not reciprocal. European commodities were not accessible to all and could not be reproduced by the forest people, thus the principles of a balanced exchange of forest resources – such as ivory and, later, meat – began to erode.

By 1907 the value of the ivory leaving south-eastern Cameroon was estimated by German colonial officials to be 1 million German marks. This is approximately equivalent to $5.8 million today.[23]

23 Converting from marks to dollars at the 1907 rate, and then factoring in inflation.

European values of ivory during the Victorian era – a material valuable enough to be sought, purchased, aggregated and transported thousands of kilometres from European markets and consumers – changed the economic and social value of ivory, and of elephants, throughout the Congo River basin. No longer was elephant hunting conducted seldom, for ritually significant ceremonies, with meat distributed along local lines of reciprocity; instead, during the colonial era elephants were hunted aggressively and frequently. Moreover, elephants were hunted using firearms, allowing hunters who were not technical experts in the tools, ecological knowledge and magical rites necessary to ensure a successful hunt to take down not one but many elephants. Elephant meat was no longer the object of the hunt. Instead commoditised tusks were the prize, leaving the forest in great numbers, with the meat abandoned in the forest.

Going underground

After Cameroon gained its independence in 1960, the remote south-eastern corner of the country emerged as a site of political resistance to the newly independent state, even as its wealth of forest resources continued to attract attention from Cameroonian officials in their official and not-so-official appraisals of national wealth. This area – which shares more characteristics with the Congo River basin in terms of geomorphology and ecology, culture, and economic connections – remains a backwater in Cameroon's national politics. For the most part, officials posted to this region received carte blanche to exploit forest resources, primarily timber and ivory, but also bushmeat, to their benefit.[24] In this region 'anything goes', and individuals with political and economic leverage can profit handsomely from illegally procured and exchanged ivory.

Following the 1989 CITES ban on all international ivory trade, ivory in south-eastern Cameroon took on yet another set of values: as a prohibited material whose trade signalled the elimination of elephants, an animal rising to international prominence as a keystone species and an icon of international conservation efforts. Thereafter, elephants became valued for their conservation status; symbolically, at least, they were more valuable than ivory for the first time since the pre-colonial period. This time it was not their meat that was prized, ultimately, but rather the donor funding from conservation efforts spearheaded by Euro-American non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the Global Environmental Fund of the World Bank.

But even as Western organisations promoted conservation, underground markets for ivory continued to thrive. Cameroonian employees of both the state and NGOs were implicated in ivory markets after 1989, complicating genuine efforts to protect elephants. Ivory and elephants now had two diametrically opposed values: as clandestine materials (ivory and meat were sold to restaurants and other merchants in Cameroonian towns and cities) through which enormous individual profit could be made, and as an iconic

24 As recently as the winter of 2016 the Sous-Préfet of Moloundou, long-suspected by local forest people of being a lynchpin in ivory-poaching networks, was finally dismissed from his post because of evidence of his involvement in the smuggling of over two-dozen tusks from the region.

species to be protected, celebrated and cherished, and utilised as an avenue to attract international attention, donor investments as well as wildlife tourism revenue. While conservation efforts continued to attract sizeable international funds until the early 2000s, the underground market for ivory and other elephant products flourished in parallel. Elephants and ivory embodied contradictory values simultaneously.

In the first decade of the 21st century, the pressure on elephants and demand for ivory continued to mount. As illegal ivory markets have swelled – propelled, perhaps, by an upswing in international ivory markets in Asia starting around 2000 – so elephant hunting has accelerated. Poaching continues unabated in much of south-eastern Cameroon. Weapons from the civil war that tore apart the Republic of Congo in the late 1990s were repurposed for hunting elephants. At the same time, elephant hunters also crossed over the Sangha River from the Central African Republic in speedboats, bearing military assault rifles and other weaponry (including grenades) from conflicts in that troubled nation. In contrast, local hunters had co-operated with national and non-governmental officials in the ivory market.

The greatest impact on elephant herds comes from the relentless, military-style hunting in the heart of the Lobéké National Park. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – which local people view with distrust because of suspicions that its employees were complicit in ivory markets in the 1990s and early 2000s – confiscated the firearms of local hunters (including colonial-era rifles) in 2014. Game wardens trained by the WWF and supported by the WWF and the Cameroonian Ministry of Forests and Wildlife (MINFOF) target local hunters, seizing any meat that they are carrying, even if it is for subsistence and has been hunted outside of the national park. This creates fear and animosity among local people.

The impact on local communities and their traditions has been parlous. So wary are local people of encounters with WWF and MINFOF officials that all local hunting has declined precipitously. Whereas meat was once openly hunted, reciprocally (re)distributed and celebrated, today it is hunted, distributed and consumed in secret. The area around the WWF headquarters in the region, in the village of Mambélé, has become a magnet for elephants (as well as other protected species, such as chimpanzees and gorillas) because residents fear pushing back against the animals with WWF officials so close by. Local people in Mambélé complain that their gardens are regularly raided by great apes and trampled by elephants. Given the dearth of hunting, when people lose access to their subsistence gardens a community that is already deeply impoverished sees significant nutritional setbacks. These increasing conflicts between elephants and people, coupled with the increased hunger and economic insecurity that local people endure, have fuelled a sense among the people of south-eastern Cameroon that external agents – Western conservation organisations, the Cameroonians who receive salaries from these organisations, and Cameroonian government officials who benefit from their participation in both conservation and ivory networks – care more about the welfare of elephants than about the welfare of the people living in this region.

So wary are local people of encounters with WWF and MINFOF officials that all local hunting has declined precipitously

And yet, still the illegal hunting of elephants continues. Local people are angered by those who hunt elephants on behalf of powerful political officials or wealthy outsiders; and so local men who hunt elephants do so in secret. The *mokopolo* is defunct; elephant carcasses

are abandoned in the forest to rot, as hunters refuse to reveal when and where they have hunted for ivory. Ivory passes into the hands of politically powerful individuals (who also usually supply the arms and ammunition for hunting), and are spirited out of the forest in official vehicles or buried in sacks of cocoa, brought to market by passing through the hands of networks of traders linked by shared kinship, language and religion to northern Cameroonian entrepreneurs.[25] Tusks are hidden in sacks of cocoa and in loads of timber, increasing exponentially in value as they are transported from the forest. In the first half of 2016 ivory fetched 200,000 XAF[26] ($342.78) per kg, rising to 450,000 XAF ($771.26) per kg in Douala, the main port of Cameroon.[27] Officially, local people are allowed to apply for a permit to hunt an elephant in order to begin the rites of initiation (*jengi*). But in reality, local people fear approaching the WWF to request such a permit, knowing that they are exposing themselves as being individuals with the knowledge, tools and capabilities to undertake a successful elephant hunt. Moreover, the cost of such a permit is beyond the reach of local people. As a result, *jengi* initiations take place without the requisite elephant hunt, and generations of knowledge of hunting – and of singing and dancing the rituals associated with elephant hunting – are receding from memory.

This indicates that formal state institutions may mean as little as they did before the colonists arrived, as there is little local assent to the system. The wholesale outsourcing of formal institutional procedures to an international NGO may work in the short run but ultimately undermines long-term conservation objectives. The imposition of externally generated norms tends to create both contradictions and unintended negative consequences.[28] Informal institutions, on the other hand (like *jengi*), appear to have been subverted to serve the ends of commoditisation. In this instance, norms can be seen to have shifted due to exogenous forces.

BRINGING IN LOCAL VALUES INTO THE IVORY BAN DEBATE

The international ban on ivory trade, as a global norm, needs to be more congruent with local realities that account for and include societal values

This paper argues that the international ban on ivory trade, as a global norm, needs to be more congruent with local realities that account for and include societal values. In other words, the implementation of the ivory trade ban depends on the very people who do not necessarily share the ideals associated with that international norm, yet also hold the responsibility to realise it. But the problem goes beyond merely addressing this gap between values promoted and held at the differing (global-state-local) levels.

The porous nature of national borders, as a result of globalisation, cannot be discounted and need to be incorporated into the discussion on social values, as they are inevitably fluid and ever-changing. Two cases are highlighted here, regarding what is often considered the *demand side* (China and South-East Asia) and the *supply side* (African states) of the

25 Christy B, 'Ivory worship', *National Geographic*, October 2012, http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/10/ivory/christy-text, accessed 10 August 2016.

26 Currency code for the Central African CFA franc.

27 Christy B, *op. cit*.

28 Acemoglu D & JA Robinson, 'Economics versus politics: Pitfalls of policy advice', *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 27, 2, 2013, pp. 173–192.

debate. In the former, values as to modalities of consumption (demand) change through interaction with international actors and consequently produce new understandings of the meaning of elephants, while in the latter (supply) the shift in values internationally brings about a change in value on the side of local actors towards the elephants found in their environment. Both instances highlight the gap between international patterns of demand and supply and their impact on local communities' approaches towards elephants.

Demand

Globalisation has provided an environment conducive to the flow of goods, people, ideas and even values, as the China example demonstrates. Swan and Conrad believe that Chinese culture has a strong influence over Asia, including Indochina, Malaysia, Philippines and Indonesia (as well as Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Singapore). This is reflected in a common instrumentalist approach towards wildlife.[29] Moreover, these societies are moving closer in other ways as well, such as through intensified trade resulting from the China–Association of Southeast Asian Nations Free Trade Area signed in 2000 and through increased migration across borders, as represented by the Chinese diaspora abroad. This is particularly true in the South-East Asian region, as highlighted in Figure 1, providing more opportunities for inter-societal engagements. Furthermore, China's growing middle class is, according to a 2015 Goldman Sachs report,[30] fuelling a tourism boom in Hong Kong and Macau, with its impact also felt in the rest of South-East Asia. Tied to this economic surge in the Chinese middle class is a growing reliance on Chinese tourism in Asia, particularly Thailand, which became a top Asia-Pacific destination in 2015.[31] This trend not only has a powerful positive impact on a host country's income (in the context of the weak global economy) but also carries with it particular socio-economic consequences linked with the necessities of a trade based on attracting foreigners to one's country. In this way social values are carried across borders through the physical engagement implied in mass tourism and virtual exchanges such as the internet, and as such are transnational mediums of exchange. Evidence of Chinese-driven ivory consumption and its links to South-East Asia is extensive. A more recent paper documents, for instance, the purchase of ivory in Mong La with a total estimated value of over $1 million, and concludes: 'Based on our study it appears that at least part of the ivory originates from Myanmar and enters China after purchase by Chinese customers. A larger amount of ivory (both raw and carved) enters Myanmar from China, only to re-enter China after being purchased by Chinese clientele in Mong La.'[32]

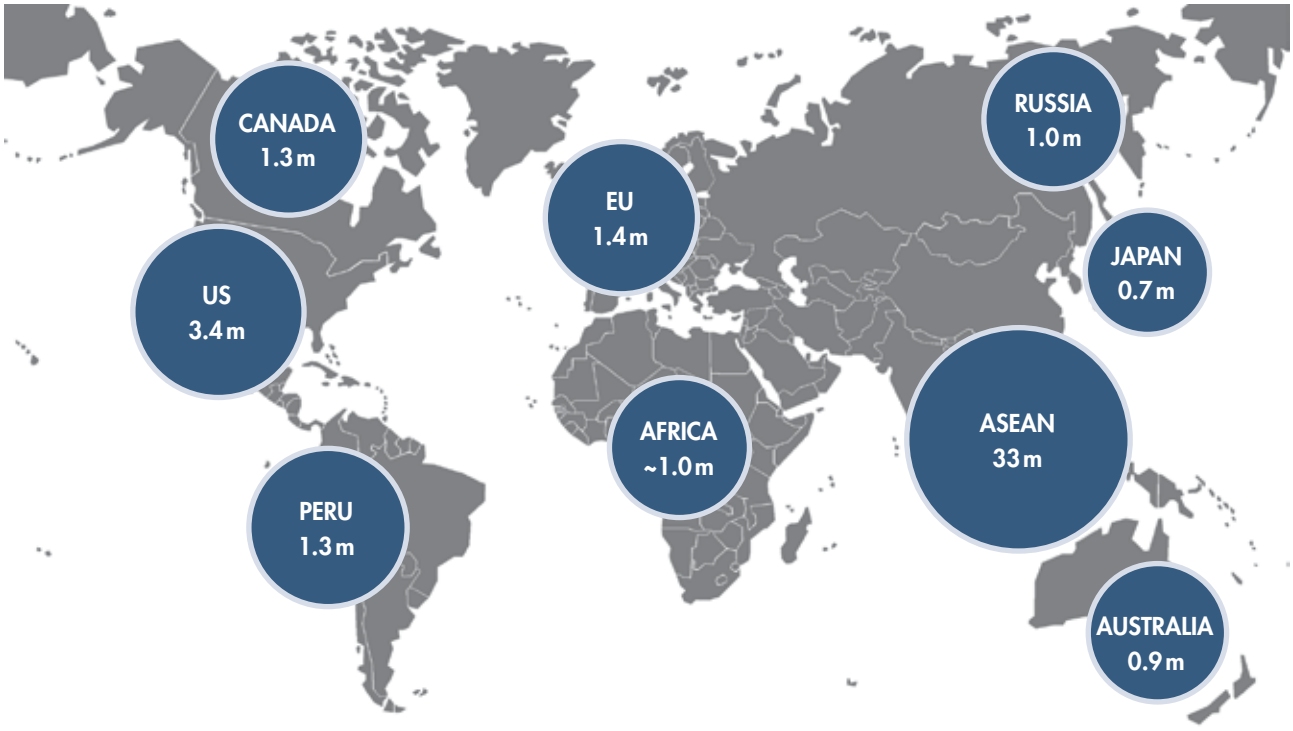
29 Swan K & K Conrad, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

30 Kawano S *et al.*, 'The Chinese tourist boom', Goldman Sachs, 20 November 2015, http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/pages/macroeconomic-insights-folder/chinese-tourist-boom/report.pdf, accessed 30 June 2016.

31 Fernquest J, 'Tourism: Thailand tops Asia-Pacific thanks to Chinese', *Bangkok Post*, 26 January 2016, http://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/work/843208/tourism-thailand-tops-asia-pacific-thanks-to-chinese, accessed 30 June 2016.

32 Nijman V & C Shepherd, 'Emergence of Mong La on the Myanmar–China border as a global hub for the international trade in ivory and elephant parts', *Biological Conservation*, 179, 2014, pp. 17–22.

FIGURE 1 OVERSEAS CHINESE BY LOCATION (AS OF 2013)



Source: Greater Pacific Capital, 'China's Overseas Population Leveraging a Critical Asset', 2013, http://greaterpacificcapital.com/chinas-overseas-population-leveraging-a-critical-asset/

Ivory's value on the demand side of the equation in this part of Asia appears to be relatively ubiquitous, associated predominantly with status. At the same time, this attitude seems to be changing, and some survey results suggest that younger affluent Chinese are less interested in possessing ivory than their parents' generation.[33] This may in part be ascribed to their exposure to international attitudes about ivory as well as their own redefinition of what constitutes prestigious forms of consumption. Yet again, recognising that values themselves can change as society evolves or in response to external engagement is critical to understanding how international norms can be sources of influence as well as sites of dispute, even within a given society.

33 Presentation delivered at the 2nd Science for Nature and People workshop, Beijing, 28 February 2016. See also Russo C, 'A young Chinese conservationist discusses his country's role in the ivory trade', *National Geographic*, 2 June 2014, http://voices.nationalgeographic.com/2014/06/02/a-young-chinese-conservationist-discusses-his-countrys-role-in-the-ivory-trade/, accessed 5 September 2016.

Supply

On the supply side, local values within elephant range states in Africa are also often conflicted, sometimes even within the same communities. But where the potential attainment of material gain coincides with a context of poverty and resentment towards conservation efforts as essentially being ties to an 'imperial' legacy, elephants are killed illegally in great volumes.

For instance, a recent *National Geographic* report[34] points to the case of the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area, situated in the Zambezi and Okavango river basins. The area is roughly the size of France and is surrounded by Angola, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe – where poaching of savannah elephants has been on the increase, particularly in the Kwando area of south-western Zambia. What is apparent in this case is the range of factors that have had an effect on the elephant population, such as biodiversity habitat loss through illegal logging, co-operation challenges between the states involved (such as creating a unitary armed force in response to poaching), and low human activity in the area (a lack of ecotourism and research presence). The regulatory challenges and risks are further heightened by the ease of crossing these state borders.

Coupled with the issue of porous interstate borders is the increase in national and cross-regional transport infrastructure projects[35] – including railways, highways, air travel and ports – often executed with only cursory planning and regulation. These have an important impact on biodiversity and illegal wildlife trade by connecting once-inaccessible areas to urban communities. In addition, a report by SADC[36] states that the number of illegally killed elephants correlates particularly closely with governance; in other words, high poaching levels tend to occur where governance is weaker.

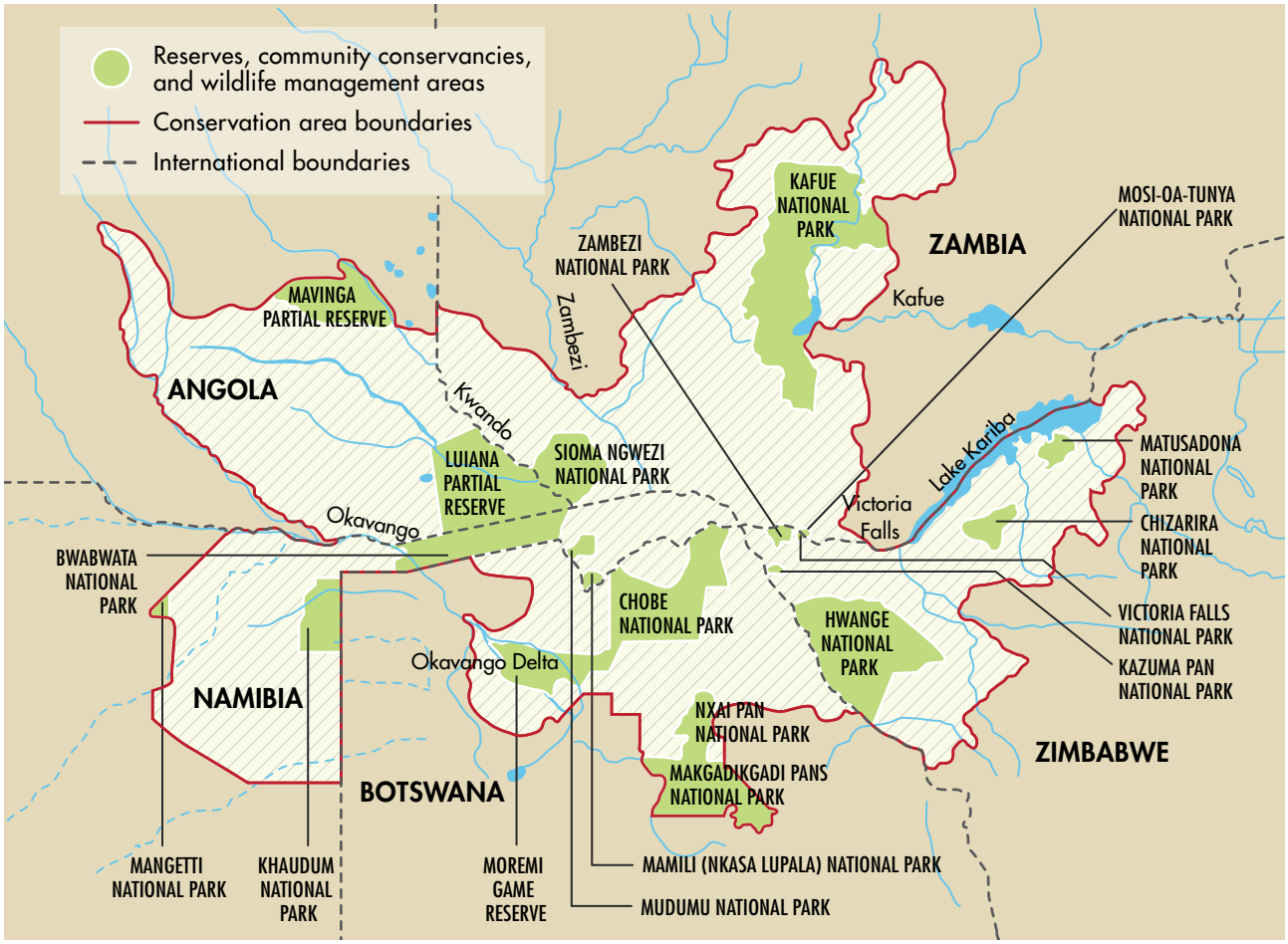
Local communities across Southern Africa tend to have different values towards wildlife conservation – and towards elephants in particular – depending largely on current institutions, historical colonial practices, and the adequacy of law enforcement. Historically, the colonial establishment of protected areas was different in each context, but such regulation of access to land and natural resources can still trigger resentment among local communities towards the conservation objective. The establishment of national parks created a system that restricted human access to the environment, except in the form of foreign tourists enjoying a so-called 'pristine' experience of the natural wilderness.

34 Cruise A, 'Elephants wiped out on alarming scale in Southern Africa', *National Geographic*, 6 April 2016, http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/04/160406-elephants-wiped-out-alarming-scale-Southern-Africa/, accessed 5 May 2016.

35 For examples, see *Mail & Guardian Africa*, 'In it to win: The game-changing projects in Africa completed in last year – and those to watch', 28 April 2016, http://mgafrica.com/article/2016-04-27-signed-sealed-delivered-the-game-changing-projects-in-africa-completed-in-the-last-year-and-those-to-watch?fb_ref=5e1658a1b7154b94b21b3904c27e174c-Twitter, accessed 28 April 2016.

36 SADC, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

FIGURE 2 THE KAVANGO–ZAMBEZI TRANSFRONTIER CONSERVATION AREA



Map created by angelathomas68@gmail.com

Source: Victoria Falls 24.com, 'KAZA TFCA to have uniform visas', 10 August 2013, http://victoriafalls24.com/blog/2013/08/10/kaza-tfca-to-have-uniform-visas/, accessed 1 July 2016

At the level of the state in Southern Africa, the dominant value that tends to drive conservation efforts is manifest in sustainable use policies. The underlying belief is that wildlife has to 'pay its way' if it is to be conserved. Increasingly, this is also a question of competing land use, where other development priorities threaten to consume land currently set aside for wildlife. With regard to elephant conservation specifically, policy demands that the ecological carrying capacity of the land not be exceeded (by excessive elephant numbers) lest it have a detrimental effect on the conservation of other species that depend on the same vegetation within a defined area. Hunting is then rationalised as a means of deriving revenue from stock that has to be removed for the sake of conservation. Similarly, trade in naturally accruing ivory is rationalised on these same grounds.

In Namibia, for instance, which has approximately 23 000 elephants, the trophy-hunting industry forms the cornerstone of community-based natural resource management, in which communities derive significant material benefits, and bush meat, from the allocation of hunting quotas. Hunting is valued as an expression of cultural identity. In Botswana, on the contrary, hunting has been banned by the state. Hunting used to provide revenues, bush meat and employment to local communities. These now no longer accrue, especially in areas that are not conducive to photographic tourism. Partly as a result, human and elephant conflict is becoming increasingly problematic, especially when coupled with climate change pressures that portend heightened conflict between people and wildlife for water and other scarce resources.[37] In the absence of hunting, which was highly valued (inherently and monetarily among many communities) the government has to be careful to ensure that historically rooted resentment vis-à-vis the colonial establishment of national parks does not result in the increased illegal harvesting of elephants. In Zimbabwe the largely successful Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) programme is under threat, as recurrent macroeconomic crises leave officials desperate for 'conservation' financing.[38] As indicated above, Zimbabwe and Namibia are also proposing to CITES, at the level of the state, to be allowed to trade their naturally accruing ivory by open auction.[39]

Those opposed to sustainable use policies tend to argue against commodification in favour of valuing wildlife inherently or for entirely non-monetary reasons. Either way, even within the 'sustainable use' value paradigm, there is a strong argument to be made that any continuation of the ivory trade will prove to be unsustainable for elephant conservation in the long run.[40]

The conventional approach prevalent in Southern Africa towards elephants and local communities aims to resolve prospective conflicts primarily through integrating locals into the commercial values of wildlife on offer, through photographic tourism and/or hunting. These are set against the commercial values of elephants (and other wildlife) as tradable commodities. However, unless carefully managed, and in many instances totally reconfigured, the mechanisms by which local communities relate to – and materially benefit from – elephants will be insufficient to stem the poaching tide that is moving

Unless carefully managed, and in many instances totally reconfigured, the mechanisms by which local communities relate to – and materially benefit from – elephants will be insufficient to stem the poaching tide

37 Songhurst A, McCulloch G & T Coulson, 'Finding pathways to human–elephant coexistence: A risky business', *Oryx*, pp. 1–8.

38 See, for instance, Chevallier R, 'The State of Community-based Natural Resource Management in Southern Africa: Assessing Progress and Looking Ahead', SAIIA Occasional Paper, 240. Johannesburg: SAIIA, August 2016; Chevallier R & R Harvey, 'Is Community-based Natural Resource Management in Botswana Viable?', SAIIA Policy Insights, 31. Johannesburg: SAIIA, April 2016.

39 Alden C & R Harvey, 2016b, *op. cit*.

40 For a rigorous discussion of the 'sustainable use' paradigm, see Orr T, 'Re-thinking the Application of Sustainable Use Policies for African Elephants in a Changed World', SAIIA Occasional Paper, 241. Johannesburg: SAIIA, August 2016.

steadily southwards, as the recent killing of 26 elephants in Botswana's Chobe National Park highlights.[41]

CONCLUSION

The focus on values and the status of elephants as understood in different societal contexts is at the heart of the new reality in the aftermath of the agreements to ban the ivory trade in the US and China. But, as this paper has shown, the conflict between values held at international and local levels is a fundamental challenge to realising the wider aims of stopping the poaching of elephants in Africa and beyond. Locally embedded values and the forces of globalisation have created a complex environment, which constitutes an especially challenging aspect for the implementation of policies such as those required to give effect to CITES decisions. The onset of these global forces has catalysed the need to consider the societal and cross-societal impacts of the ivory trade ban, since values are both locally based and transferrable in nature, making it more complex to determine which countries are supply, demand or intermediate points in the ivory supply chain. At the regional level, this means further recognising the distinctive features of countries with remaining elephant populations in developing global regulatory regimes. Especially at the level of local communities, these countries – such as Cameroon and Botswana – bring particular histories, perspectives and understandings of the relationship between elephants and themselves, which in turn exercise critical influence over these communities' approach to the questions generated by international regulatory regimes such as CITES. Linking these supply-side concerns to the varied and changing attitudes in demand countries and regions where the markets for ivory are found is another dimension of the complex web surrounding this topic.

Finding an approach that actively integrates an understanding of values dynamics at all these different levels will, we hope, recognise the contrary impacts produced by the effort to institutionalise global programmes, and lead to sustainable solutions that preserve this unique mammal and the communities that share its environment. Understanding both community values and the unique political dynamics that shape attitudes towards conservation is crucial for the preservation of wilderness landscapes that support keystone wildlife species such as elephants. CITES agreements that alienate countries and communities may backfire in terms of achieving the desired result. By far the largest elephant populations remaining in the world are distributed across Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa, while some of the most threatened sub-species are found living in the Congo River basin. If the values associated with these countries and their societies are not recognised, and if their resultant desires are not placated in some way, and if local communities in those countries that live with elephants do not benefit from conservation, the conservation objective may fail, even if CITES takes technically correct actions.

41 Pinnock D, '#ShockWildlifeTruths: Poachers kill 26 elephants in Chobe National Park', *Traveller 24 News*, 31 August 2016, traveller24.news24.com/explore/Green/shockwildlifetruths-poachers-kill-26, accessed 31 August 2016.

SAIIA'S FUNDING PROFILE

SAIIA raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. Our work is currently being funded by, among others, the Bradlow Foundation, the UK's Department for International Development, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the World Bank, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Open Society Foundations, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Oxfam South Africa and the Centre for International Governance and Innovation. SAIIA's corporate membership is drawn from the South African private sector and international businesses with an interest in Africa. In addition, SAIIA has a substantial number of international diplomatic and mainly South African institutional members.

African perspectives.
Global insights.

Jan Smuts House, East Campus, University of the Witwatersrand
PO Box 31596, Braamfontein 2017, Johannesburg, South Africa
Tel +27 (0)11 339–2021 • Fax +27 (0)11 339–2154
www.saiia.org.za • info@saiia.org.za